ERIC Document Resume	See Instruction Sheet	DATE OF RESUME	DATE RECEIVED

A. PUBLICATION DATA

1. ERIC NUMBER	2. ORIGINATOR CONTROL NO(S).	3. IDENTIFICATION NO.
ED001931	N.A.	N.A.

DO NOT WRITE IN SPACE BELOW

4. AUTHOR(S): Maryland Commission on Interracial Problems and Relations

5. TITLE OF DOCUMENT ABSTRACTED: Desegregation in the Baltimore City Schools

6. PUBLICATION TITLE: N.A.

MICROFILM COPY AVAILABLE YES ☒ NO ☐

COPYRIGHT GRANTED YES ☐ NO ☒

COPYRIGHT RELEASE FILED YES ☐ NO ☐

TYPE OF REPORT
PROPOSAL ☐
IN-PROGRESS ☐
FINAL ☒
FOLLOW-UP ☐

7. EDITOR(S): N.A.

8. PLACE OF ORIGIN
ORG. Commission on Human Relations
ST. 719 St. Paul St.
CITY, STATE Baltimore 2, Maryland
TELE. EXT.
INST/LOC CODE

9. PUBLISHER OR SOURCE
Commission on Human Relations
Baltimore, Maryland

OTHER ERIC REFERENCES:

10. VOL.	11. PAGES	12. MO./YR.	13. TOTAL PP.
N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	32

ERIC SATELLITE CODE

B. INDEXING DATA

14. SUBJECT AREA

15. TYPE OF ENDEAVOR: Report

16. INDEXING TERMS (6-12)

community involvement			teacher distribution	
school desegregation	segregationist	organizations		
parent opposition	school board policy			
open enrollment	student transfer			

17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

Compulsory racial segregation in Baltimore public schools was abolished at the start of the fall semester immediately following the Supreme Court decision of May 1954. The desegregation question was settled entirely by the school commissioners of Baltimore, an unpaid, nonpolitical lay group appointed by the mayor and endowed with a high degree of autonomy in determining educational policies. The city school board believed that the Supreme Court decision had taken the subject of desegregation out of the arena of public debate, and therefore did not seek the advice or opinions of City Hall, the State Board of Education, the PTA, or the general public. The plan adopted by the commissioners allowed for a type of open enrollment policy. All students entering the first year of elementary or secondary school were admitted to the school of their choice, white or Negro. There was no compulsory integration, and students already in school were free to transfer except where a school was declared overcrowded. Teacher eligibility lists were merged, and positions were filled on a nondiscriminatory basis.

Although boycotts, picketing, and other demonstrations by hard-core segregationists followed the opening of desegregated schools, the school disturbances cleared the air of opposition feelings and, once quelled, left the majority of citizens with a strong determination to help integration succeed. School board members are convinced that the Baltimore desegregation policy was right for that city.

ERIC No.

18. SOURCE OF ABSTRACT

C. FUNDING DATA

19. SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION	20. DIVISION OR DEPT.	21. CONTRACT NO. / PROJECT NO.
	22. TOTAL COST OF PROJECT	
	23. DURATION OF PROJECT	U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Office of Education

MARYLAND--BALTIMORE

ED001931

THE MARYLAND COMMISSION ON INTERRACIAL PROBLEMS AND RELATIONS • 719 ST. PAUL STREET, BALTIMORE 2, MAR
THE BALTIMORE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS • 719 ST. PAUL STREET, BALTIMORE 2, MARY

DESEGREGATION

IN THE BALTIMORE CITY SCHOOLS

Office of Education-EEOP
Research and Materials Branch
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DESEGREGATION

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THE BALTIMORE ENVIRONMENT FOR DESEGREGATION

Compulsory racial segregation in Baltimore public schools was abolished at the start of the fall semester immediately following the Supreme Court decision of May 17, 1954, and in advance of the Court's decrees implementing that decision. The Baltimore desegregation policy was applied to all grades of all schools simultaneously, and no special preparation for integrated classes was given either to teachers or pupils. To some extent, the racial mixing was on a voluntary basis.

Baltimore itself is a city of close to a million people, about one quarter of whom are Negroes. The largest city below the Mason-Dixon line, it has in many ways held as firmly to the traditions of racial segregation as any city in the South. Residential areas are predominantly either white or colored, with the exception of those in the process of changing color. Negroes have been excluded from nearly all hotels, restaurants, bars, motion picture houses and amusement places catering to white patrons and have been segregated as a matter of municipal policy in most recreational activities.

Since the start of World War II, Negroes in Baltimore have made marked advances. In both public and private employment they have moved out in sizable numbers from the strictly unskilled jobs into semi-skilled and even, to a limited extent, skilled positions. Colored cab drivers, bus and street car operators and firemen have been post-war innovations, and Negro white-collar workers have obtained some jobs in state and city public offices. Most downtown department stores have opened nearly all of their services to Negroes, and the color line has been dropped at the city's principal concert hall, legitimate theater and downtown moving picture houses. By and large, however, Baltimore remains a racially segregated city, with the Negroes in the poorer jobs and poorer housing.

Prior to the fall of 1954, Baltimore public schools had been

segregated by municipal ordinance since 1867. No attempt had been made to change the law through City Council action, and school officials had adhered rigidly to it, with the one exception that in 1952 Negro boys were admitted to an accelerated pre-engineering course given only at an all-male white high school, Baltimore Polytechnic Institute. Following their admittance, other colored students applied for admittance to two other specialized courses given only in white high schools. These applicants were turned down by the Board of School Commissioners, which said that separate but equal courses could and would be set up in colored schools. Lawsuits were pending in these cases when a general desegregation policy was adopted.

While the school system was segregated, no distinctions had been made for some time in the allocation of operating funds, the certification and salaries of teachers and the distribution of equipment, and a large part of the post-war building program was for new Negro schools. The colored schools had tended to be older and more crowded than many of the white schools, because they and the Negroes were in the older and more crowded sections of the city. But a considerable number of white schools were old and overcrowded as well, and there had been no loud outcry that Negro pupils were subject to deliberate discrimination in school facilities.

Negro schools had been under a separate administrative division, but it had for years been customary for white and colored principals and supervisors to meet together monthly with the Superintendent of Schools. The Baltimore Public Teachers Association, Teachers Union and Principals Association had been integrated, and when the Coordinating Council of Parent-Teacher Associations was formed in 1947, it had a mixed white and colored membership.

Prior to World War II some meetings of teachers had been on an integrated basis, and shortly after the war almost all such meetings were made bi-racial. In-service professional and community workshops and various administrative committees were changed to include both white and Negro teachers, and some interchange of white and Negro school personnel for demonstration purposes was inaugurated. Adult education classes were also partially integrated, and the consolidation of white and colored school administrative staffs in a single building was under way prior to the Supreme Court decision.

A "Community Study Program" had been established on an integrated basis during this post-war period to (1) help teachers to understand their own and the broader community and (2) encourage them to use inter-cultural and other community resources in their curricula. The first year of the three-year course stressed "inter-cultural understanding". Attendance was voluntary, with participants receiving teaching credits.

At the same time that white and Negro teachers were being exposed at an accelerated rate to mixed situations, some visits between white and colored pupils had started in connection with assembly programs, classroom exhibits, glee clubs and debates. A few racially mixed activities became regular features of the school year, such as Brotherhood Week programs, meetings of the United Nations Youth and Model Youth Council, and summer workshops of the Junior Red Cross.

The purpose of the mixed group activities at staff and pupil levels had not been to prepare the way for eventual integration but to promote whatever educational benefits might be derived from a better understanding between white and colored communities. The first year of the Community Study Program had developed the fact that as few as five per cent of the participating white teachers had ever previously heard a Negro lecturer on the subject of interracial relations.

While eventual integration was not the object of the interracial activities, Baltimore school officials now credit them with having helped to provide emotional acceptance of desegregation through the creation of professional and personal relationships between white and colored teachers and the development of an awareness of the values in differing cultures. According to official estimates, between 50 and 60 per cent of all full-time Baltimore teachers were exposed to at least the first year of the Community Study Program, and it is believed that they were helped both to treat children of another race with more understanding and to meet with rational, calming answers the questions of parents disturbed by the prospects of racial mixing.

Room for doubt remains, however, as to the extent to which interracial workshops and lectures can make school staffs feel ready for integration. It so happened that in 1953 a

community self-survey of racial relations was undertaken by more than 60 civic, religious and fraternal organizations in Baltimore under the auspices of the Maryland Commission on Interracial Problems and Relations and the Baltimore Commission on Human Relations. In the course of the survey, which consumed a year and a half, some 300 teachers and principals responded to questionnaires—prior to the adoption of the non-segregation policy.

Only a very small proportion of the white teachers and principals indicated in advance of desegregation that they considered their groups prepared to conduct integrated school programs. About half of the Negro respondents said that theirs were ready. Seventy percent of the teachers and 55 per cent of the principals stated that they had received no formal or specialized training in intergroup education. A majority indicated their belief that some type of in-service training or re-education was necessary to achieve maximum success in integrated schools; very few believed such training was unnecessary. While the sampling was small and not especially scientific, the results suggest that "readiness" for integration is not something which can be induced and that teachers may be better prepared for a change than they themselves realize.

THE SCHOOL BOARD VOTES FOR DESEGREGATED SCHOOLS

At the time of the Supreme Court decision the Board of School Commissioners was probably as well versed in the legalities of school segregation as any lay group in the country. Starting with the application of Negro students to Polytechnic Institute in 1952, the board had been through two years of learning the fine points of constitutional law from its president, Roszel C. Thomsen, who was sworn in as a Federal judge on the same day the decision was announced. In addition, the board since May of 1953 had had as one of its members Dr. Roger Howell, dean of the University of Maryland Law School.

The nine-member board, which included one Negro, was thoroughly aware that the "separate but equal" concept by *Plessy v. Ferguson* had been subjected to finer and finer distinctions, so much so that it had become difficult for Baltimore school officials to know exactly where a firm line could be

drawn. School board members, in fact, were anxious to have the Supreme Court rule one way or another on the whole issue of school segregation, in order to put an end to a period of increasing uncertainties and to provide a solid basis for future school planning.

It was evident immediately after May 17, 1954, and supported now in retrospect by the testimony of board members, that the Baltimore School Board did not for a minute consider trying to circumvent the opinion of the Supreme Court. They learned enough about the law to know that when the Court ruled directly on the question of school segregation *per se*, the ruling would be final and uncontestable. The School Commissioners had no doubts of their own about compliance, and they assumed that the majority of Baltimoreans, like it or not, would be equally ready to abide by the decision.

The assumption of public acceptance, like it or not, was substantiated by what few straws were discernible in the prevailing winds. Baltimore newspapers had greeted the Supreme Court's decision with editorials indicating acceptance, and while letters to these newspapers expressed more anti-integration than pro-integration sentiments, there were not enough of them to indicate any substantial opposition. No pro-segregation groups were known to have been organized in Baltimore immediately following the decision, and the issue was not taken up by city officials generally or by politicians. The sole exception was a one-man flurry of opposition in the City Council which came to nothing.

The School Commissioners of Baltimore are an unpaid, nonpolitical lay group, appointed by the Mayor and endowed with a high degree of autonomy in determining educational policies. When it came to the question of implementing the Supreme Court decision, the board members looked neither to City Hall nor to the State Board of Education for advice. By law and tradition, the desegregation question was theirs alone to work out. They also did not seek out public reaction or ask the opinions of civic groups or Parent-Teacher Associations. The board believed that the Supreme Court opinion had taken the subject of school segregation out of the arena of public debate.

The School Board sought no public advice, and received

none, except for an offer of assistance from the Urban League and an unsolicited set of recommendations from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Board members knew well enough, without being told, that desegregation plans would not be favored by some and possibly many Baltimoreans, but they could not see that keeping the issue open by deferring action until, say, a year hence would lessen anti-integration sentiments. On the contrary, they considered it likely that hesitation on their part would create uncertainties, engender disputes and organized resistance, and possibly bring on more litigation.

In deciding how to comply promptly with the Court decision, the School Board did not take into consideration any form of gradual desegregation, such as mixing one grade per year over a twelve-year period or applying an integration policy first to elementary schools and later to secondary schools, or vice versa. The board's attitude was simply that the Supreme Court had spoken, segregation was out, and any attempt on their part to adopt a policy of partial compliance would be a denial of the newly enunciated constitutional right of all pupils to attend all schools without any racial distinctions being made.

A factor of considerable encouragement to the School Commissioners as they faced the need for a policy decision was the knowledge that the Baltimore school system was in a favorable position for a shift to a non-segregated basis. For one thing, there was the experience that the teaching staff had already had with mixed meetings and workshops. Added to that was the quiet acceptance of colored students at Polytechnic Institute two years earlier. On top of that was the fact that Negro schools were nearly enough alike to nearby white schools to make wholesale shifts unlikely. And finally, and perhaps most important, Baltimore did not have the type of school districting which compels all the children in a given area to go to a certain school whether they all want to or not.

Baltimore pupils may enter any school which they choose, provided the school is not officially declared overcrowded—in which case attendance is limited to those children living within a specified distance. Once in a school, a child is expected to remain there. But if the parents of a child have

some valid reason for wanting him transferred, he may shift schools upon the consent of the two principals involved. To the School Commissioners, this freedom of choice, combined with the transfer privilege, meant that a desegregation policy need not be rigid in application, forcing children unwillingly into integrated situations, but could be flexible enough to allow individual adjustments.

Another factor of definite encouragement to the School Board was the confidence of Baltimore's professional school administrators that an early shift to a non-segregated basis could be made without undue difficulties. Dr. John H. Fischer, Superintendent of Public Instruction, had told reporters immediately after the Supreme Court decision that he could not see that it presented "any special problems" for the city's school system, and he had added that the schools did not anticipate "any trouble at all as far as the children are concerned." Dr. Fischer and his staff had discussed, prior to May 17, the possible effects of an opinion making segregation unconstitutional, and after that date they turned immediately to detailed planning for compliance.

No record exists of the telephone calls and private conferences among School Board members and their many consultations with administrative staff members. On the face of the record, the adoption of a historic policy change was a cut-and-dried affair, settled in the course of only three meetings, and brief meetings at that.

BOARD MEETINGS ON MAY 20TH AND JUNE 3RD

On May 20, at the first regular meeting of the Board of School Commissioners following the Supreme Court decision, Superintendent Fischer reported that it would not be possible at that time to describe in detail the effect the decision would have on school operations. But he indicated the direction which staff planning was taking when he said that there would be no need, in the light of the Supreme Court action, for a separate division of colored schools. Dr. Fischer recommended that the head of this division be retained as an assistant school superintendent, and board members accepted this proposal, thereby putting an early end to fears in the Negro community that

colored administrative personnel might lose out in any consolidation move.

Shortly after this meeting, Walter Sondheim, Jr., a board member who had been moved up to the presidency to replace Judge Thomsen, wrote to City Solicitor Thomas A. Biddison requesting "that your office furnish the board with your opinion of the effect of the recent Supreme Court decision on the duties and obligations of the Baltimore Department of Education." The letter to Mr. Biddison was not made public, and before his reply was forthcoming, School Board members read in their newspapers of a legal opinion from an altogether different source.

On May 26 the State Board of Education held its first meeting following the Supreme Court decision, and its members were advised by Maryland's Attorney General, Edward D. E. Rollins, that the state school segregation law remained in effect, pending final Court action, and that it would be unlawful for any community to "jump the gun" by desegregating its schools immediately. On the basis of this advice, the State Board of Education issued a policy statement calling for desegregation planning at the local level but adding that "no program of integration can be put into effect until the decision of the Supreme Court becomes final and an effective date is set."

That was the Attorney General's opinion, setting policy for the county school systems. Then, at the next regular meeting of the Baltimore School Commissioners on June 3, the quite opposite opinion of City Solicitor Biddison was read. After citing the city law which made it "the duty of the Board of School Commissioners . . . to organize separate schools for colored children," Mr. Biddison wrote this terse ruling:

> It is the opinion of this Office that the Supreme Court, by its decision, has determined that segregation in education, as provided for by Article 32, section 22, of the Baltimore City Code, is in deprivation of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment, and is, consequently, unconstitutional and invalid.

Baltimore's School Board members had been surprised but not set back by the Attorney General's opinion. They could

not see how a law could remain in effect after being declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. The legal opinion which they had anticipated receiving, and the one that would be applicable to city schools, was the City Solicitor's. Immediately after it was read, the following statement was suggested and unanimously adopted without discussion:

> In view of the decision of the Supreme Court regarding our public schools, and in view of an opinion given us by the Baltimore City Solicitor dated June 1, 1954, it is the opinion of this Board that our school system should be conformed to a non-segregated basis to be in effect by the opening of schools in September of this year.
>
> In doing so, we would ask our staff to prepare material outlining the practical steps to be taken and this material be presented at our next meeting.

In this brief action the principle of conformity was established just seventeen days after the Supreme Court had spoken, and it was established as a matter of course, without fuss or fanfare. By not hesitating or expressing doubts or conflicts of emotion themselves, School Board members made plain their belief that Baltimore naturally would want to uphold the opinion of the highest court of the land and to eliminate what that court had found to be a deprivation of equal educational opportunities for Negroes.

The board's action was accepted, in turn, by the Baltimore public in close to routine fashion. No room for argument had been assumed, and almost no public argument followed the adoption of the desegregation policy. Some comments on the conflict of opinion between the Attorney General and the City Solicitor were made, but they were critical of the former rather than of Mr. Biddison.

A week later at a special board meeting on June 10, Superintendent Fischer presented the requested material on the "practical steps" to be taken to put Baltimore schools on a non-segregated basis by fall. The end product of much staff discussion, the material was a blueprint for desegregation, Baltimore-style. The essential points were these:

1) Prevailing standards pertaining to school admission, grades and curricula would be maintained, except that "the

race of the pupil shall not be a consideration." Transfers of pupils from one school to another because of changes of residence would be routinely approved. "Transfers for other reasons may be approved by the two principals involved or by the appropriate assistant superintendent."

2) No child would be required to attend any particular school. The traditional freedom of school choice would be retained, except in those instances where a school was so overcrowded that admission had to be limited to children living in a prescribed area.

3) The prevailing policy of respecting relative merit in the assignments, promotion and transfer of staff members would be "scrupulously observed," and "no person shall be denied any opportunity because of his race." But, as in the past, the purpose of the Department of Education would be to "assign each employe to that position in which he is likely to render his best service to the school and to the community."

The School Board that same day unanimously adopted Dr. Fischer's report as its own statement of policy as to how Baltimore schools were to be operated on a non-segregated basis. The policy statement was subsequently forwarded to all staff members. In essence, it was a policy of simply running the school system exactly as before, minus racial distinctions.

All pupils entering the first year of primary or secondary school work were to be admitted to the school of their choice, which meant that colored children could enter formerly all-white schools, and, if desired, white children could enter formerly all-Negro schools. But there was to be no compulsory integration, in the sense that children were to be assigned to particular schools.

For children already in school, the retention of transfer privileges meant that Negro pupils would be able to shift from their former schools to more conveniently located white schools, and that white pupils could be moved, if desired, out of mixed classes. This gave the system the flexibility needed for adjusting individual problems. At the same time, the continuing right of principals to exercise control over transfers meant that mass movements could be checked.

As for the teachers, the former white and colored eligibility lists were to be merged, and positions filled on a non-dis-

criminatory basis. But again, flexibility was provided—through the continuing right of the administrative staff to decide where a teacher might render the best service to "the school" and "the community". This meant that the administrative staff intended to exercise discretion in assigning white teachers to predominantly colored classes and Negro teachers to predominantly white classes.

SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF THE BOARD'S ACTION

The social philosophy animating the decision to desegregate without hesitation in one full stride was enunciated by Superintendent Fischer, who, on June 14, called the city's approximately 5,000 teachers together and explained the new policy. Putting the Supreme Court decision in historical perspective, Dr. Fischer equated it with those past actions "which one by one have destroyed barriers that stood between the ordinary man and a richer life."

Dr. Fischer told his teachers that the School Board had met its responsibility "without fear and without subterfuge." He then paraphrased words of Robert E. Lee, saying "we cannot now do more than our duty, we shall not want to do less." He reminded his staff that at every stage of advancing democracy there had been "viewers-with-alarm," and that "each time a strengthened people proved them wrong." And he told his teachers what was expected of them:

> In one of the pivotal chapters of American history, we are now privileged to become active participants. To a greater degree than most historic events, the abolition of segregation in public schools will affect the daily lives of individuals. Because it has to do with long-established patterns of association, it will raise questions with emotional overtones. To ignore these aspects of the problem would be unwise and irresponsible.
>
> Being teachers and, therefore, students of human behavior, we need to understand these things; and being human, we must view our own attitudes with as much objectivity as we can muster. As instructors of children and leaders of community thought, we must be sensitive to the anxieties which exist, and we should prepare ourselves to be of the greatest possible

assistance in clarifying misunderstandings and providing reassurance.

Dr. Fischer spelled out for the teachers the answers to the questions most likely to arise. He said that children would not be required to attend particular schools and that no deliberate effort would be made to "mix" the schools. While transfer privileges would be retained, he explained that young children should be sent far from home to other schools "only in rare instances," and that an older pupil in the middle of a three-year secondary or vocational program "should be transferred only when it is clearly advisable for him to do so." As to the question of whether or not teachers or staff members would lose their jobs, Dr. Fischer said the answer was "no."

Reviewing all the interracial activities in the schools on pupil and staff levels over a period of fifteen years, Dr. Fischer conceded that some people would contend that these experiences were on too small a scale to be conclusive. But, Dr. Fischer said: "Many of us think that, on the contrary, these experiences do in truth represent the general reaction of pupils, teachers and parents. There is abundant evidence that good will and good sense are widely distributed among our people and that those qualities are characteristic of both our races."

PREPARATION FOR DESEGREGATED SCHOOLS

Except for this talk by Dr. Fischer—which, read in full, is an inspiring one— Baltimore teachers were given no special "preparation" for handling mixed classes, and no attempt was made to have children psychologically ready for integration. Dr. Fischer and his adminstrative staff, backed by members of the School Board, believed firmly that the less said in advance about integration the better, that talking about it would only focus attention on presumed problems and create the impression that difficulties were anticipated. Dr. Fischer felt that integration could best be carried out by "doing what comes naturally", so that the children would look upon it as a natural and normal development and hence nothing over which to become excited or disturbed.

School principals in Baltimore have a considerable degree of freedom in running their own affairs, and they prepared

for possible mixed enrollments in their own, varied ways. Some talked the whole thing over with their teachers before schools closed for the summer, others waited until fall. Some wrote staff memoranda, others did nothing. Since the desegregation policy was adopted at the very end of the school year, nobody knew how much mixing was likely to occur when schools opened in the fall. But the principals of schools which were close to both white and colored residential areas knew what might well be the results for them of desegregation, and it was up to them to handle not only their staffs but anxious parents as well.

While there were many questions and some apprehension about what would happen when schools started up again in the fall, further proof of integration's acceptance in Baltimore was provided by the summer adult education classes. For the first time in the city's history, the evening courses had both a mixed student body and a mixed faculty, without, in Dr. Fischer's words, "one single incident of unpleasantness." The courses were attended by 815 white and 385 Negro students, ranging in age from 16 on up, and as far as school officials could tell, nobody declined to register because the classes were mixed or dropped out for that reason after having registered.

The position of the School Board was also strengthened by related moves on the part of other agencies which had long followed, at least in part, the segregation tradition. On June 4, the day after the Board's adoption of desegregation in principle, the superintendent of Catholic schools in the Baltimore area announced a policy of abiding by the Supreme Court decision. On June 25, the Board of Regents of the University of Maryland voted to admit qualified Negro residents of the state to all levels of work in the fall. And on June 26, the Housing Authority of Baltimore announced that segregation would be dropped in its thirteen low-rent public housing projects.

The summer passed quickly, yielding to the long Labor Day weekend, and then came the moment that was to test once and for all the faith of Baltimore school officials that racial distinctions could be dropped without much difficulty and without wholesale shifts in school population. The test was on a large scale—the city had 86,624 white school-age children and 57,064 colored ones. When the doors of schools formerly designated as "White" were opened, Negro children had as

much freedom to enter as white children. The question all summer had been: How much mixing would take place? And the second question was: How will white parents take to the change?

BALTIMORE'S SCHOOLS OPEN AS NONSEGREGATED

Newspaper reporters and photographers were out in force on opening day, getting the names and pictures of Negro children entering schools once closed to them. But if they expected any fireworks, they were disappointed. The opening day was generally calm and as orderly as opening days ever are, with only a minimum of mixing. And the white reaction was also slight. The only public demonstration—which may or may not have had racial overtones—was at a formerly all-Negro school which had become a predominantly white school, due to the fact that a nearby Negro war housing project was being dismantled. Some white parents staged a boycott until assured that the physical condition of the school would be improved.

When the enrollment figures were totalled up at the end of September they showed only 1,576 colored pupils had entered formerly all-white schools, or to take the other side of the picture, that 55,488 colored pupils had entered or remained in colored schools. On a percentage basis, integration was limited to 3 per cent of the Negro school population, while 97 per cent of that population favored the schools which formerly had been designated as colored and which for all practical purposes remained as such (four colored elementary schools received one white pupil each, but those pupils later transferred elsewhere.)

Sixty-one schools remained all-white. Forty-eight schools, formerly all-white, received some Negroes, but in most instances the number of colored pupils was very small. The proportion of colored pupils went above 10 per cent in only five schools, all on the elementary level. The percentages of Negroes in these schools were: 13.3, 15.8, 40.4, 40.6 and 50.3. Mixing was specially limited on the secondary school level. The largest number of Negroes in predominantly white high schools was at Southern, which had 39 in a student body of 1,788. All told, the 1,576 Negroes who mixed represented 2 per cent of the

total white school population. Eighty schools remained all-Negro.

The enrollment figures, in short, bore out the predictions of school officials that there would be no great shifts in school populations. Since most residential areas of Baltimore were all-white or all-colored, the schools serving those areas remained all-white or all-Negro. In the few racially mixed neighborhoods, the schools became racially mixed. The parents of colored children entering predominantly white schools, interviewed at the time, gave convenience as their main reason for the change, rather than a belief that the white schools were better or a desire to have their children in with white children. The formerly all-white schools meant fewer streets for their children to cross.

Secondary schools in Baltimore are not located on a neighborhood basis, but they tend to fall into a regional pattern. That is, the two high schools formerly designated as colored are closer to the centers of the Negro population than most of the formerly white high schools. The time and transportation cost of getting to the predominantly white high schools was considered a factor in the small colored enrollment in these schools, plus the generally good reputation of the colored high schools in the Negro community, the friends and associations there, social and athletic activities, etc.

School principals discouraged some parents from entering children in classes already overcrowded, or placing them in extreme minority situations or shifting them to schools requiring long traveling time. But instances were rare of children being refused admittance to the school of their choice. Only a dozen requests were taken over the heads of principals to assistant superintendents, and all but one of these were granted. Dr. Bernard Harris, Sr., the Negro member of the School Board, reported late in September that as far as he knew, "everyone was getting what he wanted." He explained the small colored enrollment in formerly white schools by saying that the Negro community appreciated that mixing must be done slowly.

Principals, teachers and lay observers were unanimously agreed that the children themselves—particularly in the kindergarten and first-grade classes where most of the integration took place—were quite unconcerned about the racial mixing,

except for some initial curiosity about differences in skin and hair. Some white parents made known their distaste for integration in conversations with school staff members, but no unpleasant incidents in the schools were reported, and only a few white parents asked to have their children transferred out of mixed classes. The president of the School Commissioners, Mr. Sondheim, summed up the opening days by saying that integration was going "so smoothly there is no need for comment."

The mixing of white and Negro teachers was on an even more limited basis than the mixing of pupils. But here there was a definite policy of going slow, whereas the mixing or lack of mixing among student bodies was a voluntary development. No white teachers were assigned to colored schools, and no Negro teachers to integrated schools. Two Negro women mathematics teachers were given posts at a newly organized junior high school, a former annex of Southern High School, which, as it turned out, received no colored pupils. A third Negro, a male French teacher, was assigned to an all-white junior high school in the Curtis Bay industrial section of Baltimore. All three were well received by fellow teachers, pupils and parents alike. Later in the year three other colored teachers were assigned to formerly white junior high schools without incident.

OPPOSITION TO DESEGREGATION BECOMES MANIFEST IN SOME AREAS

Baltimore's desegregation policy gave every outward appearance of working smoothly from September 7, when schools first opened on an integrated basis, through September 29. But some trouble was brewing—trouble of the sort that can never be tracked down to a specific source because its origins lie in a complexity of riled emotions, outside influences and organizational efforts.

From early in the summer onward, a group known as the Maryland Petition Committee had been gathering signatures throughout the state to a petition calling for "the establishment of private schools for any group or groups which may wish to protect the continued existence of its own race." This committee was described by one of its officers in July as having the "unqualified endorsement" of Bryant Bowles's National As-

sociation for the Advancement of White People, which "stands ready to advise and assist us in forming a permanent organization capable of continually asserting our rights as a race." The Petition Committee had given no indication of seeking to prevent school integration through extra-legal means. On the contrary, it took the legal course early in September, along with the National Association for the Advancement of White People and several individuals, of challenging the legality of the School Board's desegregation policy in Baltimore's Superior Court and asking for a writ of mandamus. But in seeking signatures for its petition, the committee had stirred up opposition to desegration.

A second form of organized resistance to racially mixed schools made its appearance in mid-September in Anne Arundel county, which lies immediately south of Baltimore. There, some 400 parents held a protest meeting attended mainly by residents of several southern Maryland counties but also by some Baltimoreans. Representatives of the Maryland Petition Committee were active at this meeting, too. But again, the talk was of seeking legal means of preventing integration, rather than of picketing and boycotts.

A third form of resistance, indigenous to the city proper, was centered in a comparatively small area of South Baltimore and had at its focal point a group of parents of children at School 34 where eleven colored children were enrolled in a student body of 581 elementary children. This group had some private meetings and, soon after school opened, endeavored by telephone calls to several school officials to have a mass meeting called so that they could express their dislike of integration. A representative of the Coordinating Council of Parent-Teacher Associations met with them on September 20 and found them to be angrily anti-desegregation. But again, the talk was not of taking direct action to stop integrated classes.

When the trouble came, it came to South Baltimore, spreading outward from School 34, and for the most part it was confined to South Baltimore. It came not to mixed neighborhoods with heavy enrollments of colored children in formerly all-white schools but to predominantly white neighborhoods which had tried to "hold the line" against Negro residential expansion and which, as a result, had schools with

quite small colored enrollments—less than 3 percent, on the average. A study of the census data for the trouble neighborhoods shows that the average adult had less formal education and a lower annual income than the average Baltimorean. It also shows a higher percentage of home-ownership than in the city as a whole, and correspondingly less residential mobility or disposition to shift geographically.

The picture, then, is of a generally lower-income area, many of the residents of which had long identified themselves with that particular section of the city, owned their own not-too-substantial homes, resented any change to Negro occupancy and were not in a position or of a mind to move to outlying all-white suburbs, as other Baltimoreans were doing. Subsequent developments further revealed that these were people who did not understand the legal effects of a Supreme Court decision or the policy-making powers of the School Board and bitterly resented the fact that they had not been given the opportunity to vote on desegregation or even to make their opinions heard.

The spark that set aflame the anti-integration sentiments in South Baltimore most likely came from Milford, Delaware. In that town, only a few miles from the eastern boundary of Maryland, white parents stirred up such a fuss over the admission of eleven colored pupils to a formely all-white high school that Milford schools were closed down during the week of September 20. The developments in Milford, including the many utterances of Bryant Bowles, who had gone there to enlist members in his National Association for the Advancement of White People, were reported daily as local news in the Baltimore press, and school officials believe that South Baltimoreans not only followed the news accounts closely but that some of them visited Milford and saw the demonstration at first hand.

"Milford had the right idea" was heard on more than one occasion during Baltimore's troubled period. Milford had suggested a way for opponents of integration to take action, to stage a protest, to get their views before the public. To what extent the Baltimore demonstrations were spontaneous eruptions of previously unchanneled emotions and to what extent they were directed by the organized resistance groups in and around South Baltimore will probably never be known. The demonstrations ended by being so thoroughly discredited that

nobody afterwards acknowledged being a leader in them. The best guess, however, is that they were largely spontaneous, with a small, loosely organized group spurring the crowds on.

PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS OF OPPOSITION

As for the troubles themselves, they were in retrospect quite a minor part of Baltimore's first year of non-segregated schooling. Picketing broke out at School 34 on Thursday, September 30. The next day it spread to half a dozen other elementary schools in or close to the South Baltimore area, and that same day about half the pupils at Southern High School staged a "strike" that caused large crowds to mill about in front of the school during most of the day, leading to a near riot when Negro pupils emerged. The following Monday a large group of high school pupils marched through the city, trying to induce other white secondary high schools to join them. And the next day the disturbances came to an abrupt end, following police warnings the evening before that school picketers would be arrested.

All told, the demonstrations found active support among the pupils or parents of pupils at less than a dozen of the 48 schools with mixed white-Negro enrollments. In the school system as a whole, 97 per cent of all pupils remained in their classes throughout the troubled period, and there is no way of telling how much of the remaining three per cent represented actual sympathy with the protestants. One thing Baltimore learned was that it only took a few pickets to start a crowd forming, and once that happened, parents of small children were afraid to have them exposed to possible rioting and violence.

Children were also turned back before they reached school by persons who told them that their schools were closed. In addition to this, anonymous telephone callers were busy throughout the trouble days, using various scare techniques to convince parents either to keep their children home or to go and get them out of school, if they had already left home. So, the three per cent of children who missed classes only represented in part a deliberate boycott.

COMMUNITY SANCTIONS WHICH ENDED THE DEMONSTRATIONS

Baltimore first contained and then put an end to its school disturbances through firmness on the part of school officials, effective action on the part of the police force and an overnight massing of public opinion against attempts to disrupt the city's schools. The School Board made its position clear on the first day by issuing a statement that all schools would remain open and all school children safeguarded. No school was closed down, and not a single principal or teacher deviated from his or her job of seeing to it that classwork continued in as nearly normal a manner as possible.

The police force, for its part, spent the first two days of the disturbances keeping crowds in order and preventing violence but not in breaking up the picketing. On the afternoon of the third day, after an anxious but quiet weekend, the Police Commissioner, the late Beverly Ober, consulted with civic leaders and legal advisers and decided that since "discretion, persuasion and forbearance" had not met with "the success which the citizens of Baltimore have a right to expect," there henceforth would be strict enforcement of two Maryland laws, one against inducing or attempting to induce a child to absent himself unlawfully from school and the other against disturbing "any public school session."

Commissioner Ober's warning, broadcast repeatedly by radio and television, pointed out the difference between peaceful assembly "in halls or other appropriate places" and the creation of disturbances in front of schools. The latter, he said, "will cease tomorrow" or picketers would face arrest. Commissioner Ober's stern, unequivocal statement, coming at the time the resistance was already showing signs of losing steam, brought the disturbances to a fast halt. The next morning a few persons in front of schools were shooed away by police, and the troubles were over.

As for public opinion, it was rallied to the support of the School Board to an extent that was quite unusual in amiable, unperturbable Baltimore. Civic, fraternal, religious and labor organizations publicly decried the picketing and mob actions. Newspapers called editorially for law and order. Ministers in South Baltimore were mobilized to appeal from their pulpits for an end to scare tactics and to school disturbances. Repre-

sentatives of welfare and human relations agencies went into the troubled area to talk to the people, and the principal of Southern High School, John H. Schwatka, made a moving appeal via television to all South Baltimore pupils and parents.

In fact, some school officials and observers believe, in retrospect, that the disturbances had a salutary effect. First of all, the most bitter opponents of desegregation had their days of public expression and found themselves in the minority, thereby relieving the pressure of unspoken and hence unmeasured hostility toward integration. Secondly, the School Board was put to the test and held fast, making it clear that Baltimore was not another Milford. And third, public support of integration was crystallized. Organizations that previously had taken no position on the School Board's desegregation move and were even doubtful about its wisdom suddenly appreciated, when law and order were challenged, which side they were on—and this was also true of some principals and teachers.

While the disturbing features of the demonstrations were publicized at the time, there were many heartening episodes as well. Teachers at Southern High School risked their own safety and community standing to protect their colored pupils and the Southern football team stood by its one colored player, refusing to play without him on the day of the "strike". Pupils in the large mid-town high schools stayed in their classes when rowdy student marchers from other schools stood outside and urged them to join the parade. And when a woman invaded the Curtis Bay classroom where the Negro teacher of French was assigned, two white girls rose and rebuked her for making insulting remarks. The woman then withdrew.

Many other examples are available, all showing how principals, teachers, parents, pupils, police officers and organizations rose to the occasion, heading off violence, quieting fears, protecting the innocent, standing by the schools and, hardest of all, going through daily routines as though nothing unusual were going on. Through it all, too, the Negro community was a model of controlled emotions and disciplined calmness, not doing or saying a thing that might have further fanned opposition to desegregation. The demonstrations were a white problem, and Baltimore Negroes wisely left them to the white community to settle.

As a clincher on the disturbances, Judge James K. Cullen heard in Superior Court on October 5 (the day picketing ceased) the arguments in the suit against the School Board brought by the Maryland Petition Committee and the Naional Association for the Advancement of White People. In a decision rendered the same day, in the interests of "public necessity", he took the legal ground from under integration opponents and also ended talk of the conflict between the previous ruling of the City Solicitor and that of the Attorney General. "The Board of School Commissioners," Judge Cullen said, "has exercised its discretion legally and in accordance with a final and enforceable holding and decision of the Supreme Court of the United States."

For the benefit of a crowded courtroom and the public at large, Judge Cullen added this admonition to disturbers of school peace:

> The segregation cases were undoubtedly argued before the Supreme Court fully, and the feeling of every citizen in the United States was presented to the court. The Court has spoken, and whether an individual agrees or disagrees with that finding, he is bound thereby so long as it remains the law of the land.
>
> The Court realizes the change which has come about in this regard, and the difficulty that some may have accepting the reality or the inevitable from the standpoint of enforcement. We live in a country where our rights and liberties have been protected under a system of laws which we know are the best known to man. We must resolve ourselves to be governed by those laws, realizing that among a vast number of people there must be a variety of opinions. The law of the land must be respected. We must all be forced to abide by it.

COMMUNITY ATTITUDES

Judge Cullen's decision and the police warning against school picketing did not entirely end resistance in Baltimore to desegregation. On the same night that the Police Commissioner took to the air with his warning that school disturbers would be arrested, Bryant Bowles held the first of two mass meetings at an Anne Arundel County raceway, just beyond the

southern Baltimore line. Later in the fall, headquarters of a Maryland chapter of his National Association for the Advancement of White People was set up in a former bakery in South Baltimore. But the Bowles movement in Baltimore did not gain the momentum that it had in Southern Delaware, where Bowles eventually settled down as a resident foe of integrated schools.

A second South Baltimore organization known as the Baltimore Association for States' Rights was also set up, having as a core the desegregation opponents in the vicinity of School 34. This organization and the Maryland Petition Committee devoted considerable energy at the 1955 session of the General Assembly in an effort to have two bills passed that were aimed at circumventing the Supreme Court decision. No legislator was willing to introduce them until late in the session, and no action was taken when they were finally introduced.

While the school disturbances did not end all opposition to mixed classes, they definitely cleared the air. The dissident element had blown off steam, and the city had weathered the storm with a firmness and unanimity that made Baltimoreans feel that integration was unquestionably here to stay. There was a minimum of police arrests and, in the schools, a minimum of penalities for those pupils on the secondary level who took leading roles in the "strike" and protest march. The three days of trouble were regarded as a shameful lesson in mob action, and the determination was strong not to let it happen again.

A REVIEW OF THE FIRST YEAR

School officials who had looked forward with apprehension to the possibilities of such demonstrations, now had them behind them. For the first time they knew for a certainty that the great majority of Baltimoreans stood behind them and against the demonstrators. School attendance was back to normal in a very short time, and there were no more incidents of any kind during the remainder of the school year. Negro enrollment increased somewhat at Southern High School during the February admission period (39 colored girls, 25 colored boys in a student body of 1,820), but drew no adverse comments. And at School 74, for the first time in Baltimore, col-

ored enrollment went well ahead of white: 398 to 332; again, without unfavorable reactions.

As far as this study was able to determine from interviews with principals and teachers, there are no school or classroom problems inherent in integration. The problems that arise, whether they concern behavior, personal habits, learning speed or group participation, are problems encountered in all schools with children of all races and religions. A few teachers and principals in Baltimore are inclined to attach racial significance to the problems they have faced, but others say that no problems have arisen that would not have arisen if their schools had remained all-white (this is in reference to children only; there have been a few problems with parents directly attributable to integration).

Baltimore principals and teachers are predominantly natives of Maryland or states farther south, and some of those interviewed admitted their early apprehensions about mixed student bodies. It has come as a surprise to some of them that they so quickly stopped thinking of colored children as being colored and started thinking of them only as children—children among many children, all with common problems, fears, enthusiasms and reactions. Whether a teacher has liked the mixing or not, she has had her educational guides and standards to follow, and they have applied to colored children as well as to white. So, in most cases, her classwork has remained basically the same.

The standard fears, in advance of integration, are that colored children will create health, behavior, social and academic problems. After a year's experience with integration, Baltimore has found the first three of these fears groundless, and the fourth open to some questions.

While the first year in Baltimore produced no health problems, it did produce rumors of toilet seat infections and of trench mouth in South Baltimore, where some people were ready to believe and pass along any story indicating that integration was having bad effects. School officials set the minds of parents at ease with proof that the rumors were false.

Social and behavior problems did not even reach the rumor stage. Baltimore remains a generally segregated city, outside of classrooms. The children attend classes together and then go their separate ways after schools let out. At the high

school level, Negroes attend dances with colored partners and stick with those partners as closely as any high school student sticks to his date. If any mixed dating takes place after school hours, it is on too small a scale to have attracted attention or comment. The mores of the community prevail, and give every indication of continuing to prevail.

As for academic problems, Baltimore had none in the first year as far as white children suffering from integration was concerned. Academic standards were not lowered or classwork slowed down to accommodate the colored children. There were some top Negro pupils, some middling ones, and some who learned very little, as was the case with white children. But in some elementary schools, where most of the mixing took place, it was noted that the proportion of slow learners among the colored children was greater than among the white. The difference was not apparent in the kindergarten and first grade, where Negro children made fine progress, but showed up in the upper grades.

The explanations were obvious ones: The colored children had come by and large from overcrowded colored schools, with less individual attention, and from overcrowded homes, with less opportunity to study in quiet and with less adult emphasis on educational values. And behind all that was the fact that Negroes have had fewer opportunities to obtain the jobs that are the supposed rewards of higher education and hence have had less incentive to learn. The native ability of colored children to learn was plain enough in those mixed classes where they entered as beginners, but among the older children who had transferred from segregated classes, it was equally plain that native abilities had not always been fully developed.

Educators have long recognized that social and economic environment is reflected in scholastic achievement. They have found it to be true with white children, and have learned to deal with the problem, adjusting programs to varying learning speeds among children in the same classroom. Baltimore teachers found no new problem with mixed classes. They only found in some instances that the old problem of dealing with children of poor socio-economic background was intensified.

On the secondary-school level the amount of mixing was too small for definite conclusions, but again it was noted by principals that some colored pupils gave evidence of inade-

quate preparation, compared to white pupils. On the other hand, some colored pupils made out well in the most difficult pre-engineering and liberal arts courses given in the city. On the evidence to date, some school officials are inclined to the position that it may become necessary to reexamine the teaching programs in colored schools and to consider some type of remedial work for those Negroes who need special help in adjusting to secondary-level curricula.

On the question of preparing teachers for handling mixed classes, opinion in Baltimore is somewhat divided after a year's experience. Most principals and teachers agree in retrospect that they had become prepared for integration, probably in the most natural and best way, through nearly a decade of mixed staff meetings, workshops, study programs and the like.

Some believe that it would have been helpful to have talked out beliefs, apprehensions and feelings in advance. Others insist that talking only confuses things and creates apprehensions, sometimes needless apprehensions. These principals and teachers believe that in conducting integrated classes, as in conducting nearly all human activities, there is no substitute for actual experience.

Agreement is general that preparations for integration, of whatever kind or degree, would not have eliminated the awkwardness, hurts, fears and mistakes that were bound to arise when new children came into a school. A teacher had to feel her way along as always, appreciating that children were children, whatever their color. The same thing was also true of principals. They, too, had to feel their way along, gauging for themselves the readiness of their communities for such racially mixed events as parent-teacher teas and children's dance recitals. Some schools went right ahead with full schedules of social events; others moved more slowly, waiting for neighboring attitudes to adjust to the change.

School Board members, for their part, are convinced that the Baltimore desegregation policy was right for Baltimore. Looking back, they cannot see that there would have been anything to gain by moving more slowly and possibly much to lose. They do not believe that integration can be approached gingerly, like a bather testing the water with his toes and then backing away. They believe that the best way to get started is to plunge in, that half-way measures only prolong the agony

and lead to complications. They know of no way to change, in advance of integration, the attitudes of those who are opposed to it. Opponents can only be shown that, once in, it is not as bad as they thought it was going to be.

A study of a year of non-segregated schooling in Baltimore has led to some tentative conclusions, the application of which to situations in other communities would necessarily be conditioned by what the Supreme Court recognized as "the great variety of local conditions." These conclusions are that:

The clear positions taken by the School Board, Department of Education, Police Department and all others having a part in the first year of desegregation were a stabilizing influence from start to finish. Nobody hedged or said anything that he did not intend to back up. Baltimoreans knew at all times exactly where law and order stood, and their attitudes were shaped in part by that knowledge. School staff members also knew exactly what was expected of them and were strengthened by that knowledge.

The fact that some and possibly many members of a community, and even some principals and teachers, feel that the "time is not ripe" for integration does not necessarily mean that integration will not work. It has been Baltimore's experience that non-segragated schools have gone ahead as smoothly as segregated ones, even though prevailing attitudes toward Negroes have undergone no noticeable changes. As long as a school system is dedicated to the job of educating children, skin coloration presents no problems that cannot be solved within the framework of standard teaching procedures.

When Negroes are given their choice of schools, they choose the schools that are most convenient to their homes, other factors being equal. In Baltimore at least, there was no rush of colored children to white schools just because the schools were white. There also was no evidence, despite the small amount of mixing, that Negroes were deliberately discouraged or prevented from entering white schools, if they wanted to be admitted.

A professional pride of accomplishment is apparent in most interviews with principals and teachers. Integration has been a stimulating experience for many of them and a source of fresh confidence in their own abilities to handle children.

Most of the parental fears of integration can be dispelled

through the actual experience of integration. Attitudes towards Negroes as a group are not so easily changed. It may well be, in fact, that the parent who on the surface is opposed to having a Negro child in the same class with his white child is, at bottom, reacting to the realization that his child may grow up with different attitudes than his own. This suggests the age-old problem of one generation not wanting the next generation to have different sets of values, a problem eased by closer associations between school and parent as well as between school and child.

Judging by Baltimore's experience, picketing and demonstrations are more likely to occur in neighborhoods that have remained as white barriers to Negro residential expansion. In such neighborhoods, the presence of Negroes in the neighborhood school may be considered as an "invasion" not only of the school but of the neighborhood itself. Also, and this has bearing on the "gradual" approach to desegregation, the neighborhoods that get mixing in their schools ahead of other neighborhoods may work up a feeling that they are being made to bear the greater burden of non-segregation.

To cut short picketing, boycotts and other demonstrations of opposition to integration, the firm maintenance of impartial law and order by the police is essential, and the taking of strong positions against the demonstrations by the better elements in the community is most helpful. At such times, the more people who stand up and have themselves counted on the side of law and order, the better.

In advance of the demonstrations in Baltimore, some of the protesting groups were angrily resentful that they had not been given an opportunity to make themselves heard. The School Board, before setting its non-segregation policy, did not hold hearings or seek out expressions of public opinion, believing that compliance with a Supreme Court decision was not something on which people could vote "yes", "no" or "maybe". For Baltimore itself, the School Board's approach appears to have been the correct one, since the only active opposition was of the small, hard-core variety that no amount of argument would have changed. Other communities, however, might consider it advisable to have some forum other than a picket line for desegregation opponents, if only to let them blow off steam without disturbing and possibly endangering school children.